

over and asked, “Why did you do that?” She had asked a \$64,000 question, and I didn’t have an answer.

Mom and Dad were quite scared when this lady called and told them what had happened, and it wasn’t long before they were rushing me to the hospital. I spent the next four days there with a compound fracture of my left arm. After five days, I returned to school, still hurting from the accident and embarrassed about it. Unfortunately, that isn’t the end of my story.

A few weeks later, during a follow-up visit with the doc, X-rays showed that my bones weren’t growing back together right. The doc re-admitted me to the hospital for surgery to have two long pins put in my arm. Dad was out of town on assignment at the time, so Mom had to take even more time from work for my hospital stay.

Now I have to wear a cast on my arm for several more weeks, and doctors one day will have to remove the pins, which will mean another hospital stay. In the meantime, I can’t play hockey, and I need help now and then with everyday tasks.

Dad was upset for a spell with the property owners where my accident occurred, saying some-

thing about a lack of supervision. Another parent had asked the owners to take down the ramp before someone got hurt. But Dad and I know my problem was my own doing. Maybe I’ll ask him to tell me more about that ORM stuff.

Moms and dads of today’s youngsters, please be aware of what is happening in and around your home. The jump ramp that took me down came down itself right after the property owners learned someone had gotten hurt on it.

Until my arm mends, I have to deal with the pain. I also have to learn how to work with my handicap and how to face my embarrassment. I feel like I’ve overcome the latter a little bit by getting up the courage to share my story with you. I hope it can save someone else from harm. Let this be a learning experience for all of us. ✠

Evan is the son of AMCS Steve Novak, a maintenance analyst at the Naval Safety Center. According to Dad, Evan is well on his way to recovery.

Youthful daredevils aren’t the only ones who sometimes have problems with bicycles. The article that follows describes the difficulties a wife encountered when she went riding with her husband.

What Else Can Happen?

By BMC(SW/DV) Richard Vitez,
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That’s a question my wife asked when she and I went on a bicycle ride from our home to Sea Shore State Park in Virginia Beach.

It was a sunny day as we headed toward the beachfront. We stayed on the designated bike paths and crossed roadways at the crosswalks. Everything was fine until shortly after we reached the Virginia Beach boardwalk, where some work was in progress on the bike path. I saw a yellow strip of tape, about 4 feet high, across the area and went around it, but my wife didn’t follow my lead. Instead, she burst through the tape and came to a stop about 5 feet into newly laid concrete pavers.

Seeing she was OK, I couldn’t resist a few chuckles. Meanwhile, she apologized to the



Helmets are mandatory for everyone who rides a bicycle on DoD installations.

workers, and then we continued our ride. Soon, we left the safety of the bicycle path and went a couple of blocks into the city to get a sandwich.

We had just left the sandwich shop and were crossing an intersection when my wife had her second problem of the day. I had crossed the intersection as a car stopped, and my wife, thinking it would stay stopped for her, too, started across. Unfortunately, the driver only did a rolling stop, then made a right turn directly in front of her. The back of his car hit her front wheel and knocked her down.

She was shaken by this encounter but again had escaped injury. After the driver had pulled over and apologized to both of us, we continued our trip to the park and arrived there without further incident.

Our journey home, however, was marked by another problem. We had crossed the bridge at Lynnhaven Inlet and were heading south—not on the bike path yet, though. I planned to cross to the path further down the road. While riding on the sidewalk, we had to cross several residential streets. As before, I was riding about 6 feet ahead of my wife. I had just crossed one street when a car turned onto it and stopped in front of my wife. Unable to brake in time, she hit the car door and dented it but was able to ride away with nothing more than a bruised leg. We'll never know for sure, but we think the lady driving the car didn't see my wife, or she felt she could make the turn in time to avoid a collision.

What did we learn from our “fun” escapade?

- To start with, bike riding is dangerous, especially when you interact with cars. Some motorists don't look out for bicyclists.

- It's too easy to get thrown off your bicycle. That's why helmets and brightly colored clothing are mandatory for everyone riding on DoD installations. Check with local law-enforcement agencies for mandatory requirements in your area. We recommend using helmets at all times.

- Never assume a motor-vehicle operator can see you. Get positive feedback, such as a wave, a nod, or the car's blinking lights.

- Last, but not least, use the five-step process known as operational risk management: Identify hazards, assess hazards, make risk decisions, implement controls, and supervise (watch for changes). ■

The Fishing

By Ltjg. Michael France,
VAW-117

As your average 25-year-old males with superman egos, a squadronmate and I learned an important lesson one Saturday: It doesn't pay to scrimp when planning an event.

We awoke early, eager to begin our fishing trip to Lake Ray Roberts in North Texas. We had been dreaming for days about catching crappie and largemouth bass. After loading minimal gear and without checking the weather forecast, we headed to the lake.

During the 30-minute drive, we saw clouds moving in, and there were light winds and drizzle, with a temperature in the low 60s. Even though the weather was less than perfect, we launched our 12-foot boat and started toward our favorite fishing hole. The water was a little choppy, and a nippy northern wind was blowing by the time we arrived at our spot, but we decided to try our luck.

Our first priority was to tie the stern of the boat to a tree branch and drop anchor off the bow so we could hold our position. I tied off the stern, then moved to the bow, where my buddy was having trouble with a tangled anchor line. As I picked up a handful of line, unknown to me, part of it wrapped around my leg. I was working to free myself when I looked up in horror to see my buddy getting ready to heave the anchor overboard.

Before I could say, “Don't throw it yet,” or before I could move toward him and grab his arm, he tossed the anchor in the water. My grip on the side of the boat was no match for the momentum of the anchor, and the noose around my leg grew tighter. After making a large splash, I worked desperately to tread water. Soon, however, I found myself sinking deeper into the cold water.

The anchor sank 15 feet to the bottom, and I was halfway between there and the surface. I again tried to loosen the rope around my leg, but it wouldn't give because my partner, in his infinite wisdom, was trying to pull me up with the other end. His efforts were working, but at my expense: The pain from the “tourniquet” on my leg was excruciating.